



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: May 3, 2006

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XV: Consideration of resolution authorizing (a) the acquisition of all or a portion of the approximately 1,012 acre Rio Dulce Ranch property in Soldadad Canyon; (b) entering into agreements with, and accepting funds from, other public agencies and non-profit organizations; (c) authorizing the use of both in lieu mitigation fees and the Pardee-Fair Oaks mitigation funds for said acquisition; (d) submitting a minimum bid of \$185,000, and (e) signing an Agreement of Purchase and Sale, unincorporated Los Angeles County. Negotiators: Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, San Francisco Bankruptcy Court and RDR Resolution, LLC. Under consideration: price and terms. (This item may be heard in closed session pursuant to Government Code § 54956.8.)**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing (a) the acquisition of all or a portion of the approximately 1,012 acre Rio Dulce Ranch property in Soledad Canyon; (b) entering into agreements with, and accepting funds from, other public agencies and non-profit organizations; (c) authorizing the use of both in lieu mitigation fees and the Pardee-Fair Oaks mitigation funds for said acquisition; (d) submitting a minimum bid of \$185,000, and (e) signing an Agreement of Purchase and Sale.

Background: The subject property known as Rio Dulce Ranch, comprised of approximately 1,015 acres, is located south of State Route 14 (Antelope Valley Freeway), mostly east of Agua Dulce Canyon Road, and north of the Santa Clara River where it generally referred to as Soledad Canyon. The Assessor's parcel numbers are provided in an attachment and the attached figure shows the location. The MRCA owns over 250 acres along the eastern boundary, 10 acres along the southern boundary, and as of last week, acquired 29 acres along the western boundary. Numerous Bureau of Land Management (BLM) parcels are also in the immediate vicinity. Almost one mile of the Pacific Crest Trail courses through the northern 319-acre parcel (Parcel A).

The attached brochure regarding the auction describes much about the property. The majority of the property is made up of a core irregularly-shaped 883 acres. Another five-acre parcel and another area of 98 acres lies to the south of the main Ranch just north of Soledad Canyon Road. Another 26-acre parcel is located to the west of Aqua Dulce Canyon Road, at the exit ramp from State Highway 14. Briggs Road, an unpaved easement, passes through the two largest groups of parcels between Aqua Dulce Canyon Road and Soledad Canyon Road. According to the sales brochure, there are no structures on the property except for electrical transmission towers which cross the northern portion of the property.

The terrain varies from mountainous slopes and ridges to level valley bottoms. Because of the higher elevations, the property provides far-reaching views of the surrounding canyons and the San Gabriel Mountains. Vegetation consists mainly of sage, yucca, and junipers. The property is central to the multi-agency Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) submitted to the California Department of Fish and Game last year. The CAPP provides a realistic acquisition plan to connect the two portions of the Angeles National Forest across State Route 14 (San Gabriel to Sierra Pelona ranges). The Pacific Crest Trail is connected via the Briggs Edison fire road. A minimum of six USGS blueline streams course through the subject property. The property is regionally significant.

The property is being sold by public outcry auction in San Francisco on May 26, 2006. The minimum bid amount of \$185,000 (10 percent of the total) must be submitted on or before May 16<sup>th</sup>. The MRCA's appraisal is due May 11<sup>th</sup> for a verbal value with a written report on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The minimum bid price is \$1,850,000 for the entire property.

Assembling the funding for the proposed project will require numerous sources including the City of Santa Clarita, the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, Santa Clarita Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority, and Los Angeles County via Proposition A Excess funds administered by the Regional Park and Open Space District. MRCA sources include in lieu mitigation fees and the Pardee-Fair Oaks mitigation fund. The total final bid amount is due 10 days after the auction. The MRCA's success in this process shall depend on a short term loan from one of its non-profit partners.

The Governing Board has already authorized the use of various mitigation funds to acquire the strategic 26-acre property located at the southwest corner of SR 14 and Agua Dulce Canyon Road. This parcel is critical to wildlife movement under State Route 14.

The Santa Clarita Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority has also authorized funding for the subject 26-acre parcel and that is available prior to June 4th.

At its January 11, 2006 meeting the Governing Board also authorized entering into a project agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District to the acquire this 26-acre property, along with other tax defaulted properties, with 5<sup>th</sup> District

Proposition A Excess Funds. That was through a Chapter 8 sale and the property was removed from that Chapter 8 sale because of the subject bankruptcy. Fortunately the majority of that \$185,000 is still available to contribute to the subject bid. That funding may be available by the June 4<sup>th</sup> closing date to minimize the necessary size of a loan.

At its April 5, 2006 meeting the Governing Board authorized entering into a project agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District to the acquire the property with 5<sup>th</sup> District Proposition A Excess Funds. Staff was able to negotiate an arrangement for those funds last week.

The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy is scheduled consider authorizing a grant for the acquisition to the MRCA at its meeting of May 22 prior to the auction.

Financial details will be discussed in closed session.